

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress Massachusetts Seventh District

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HOUSE PANEL LEAVES ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE REVENUES OUT OF BUDGET

Washington, DC: Today, the House Budget Committee spurned President Bush's request to use the budget process to try to force oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), the lead Democratic sponsor of the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act (H.R. 567), praised the committee for their decision not to try to force this issue through a "budgetary back door maneuver." In early February, Mr. Markey was joined by 107 of his Democratic colleagues in urging the committee to keep the Arctic Refuge out of the budget.

"In poll after poll, the American people have expressed their disapproval of using the budget to decide such a contentious issue," said Mr. Markey. "The fate of the Arctic Refuge deserves to be debated among members of Congress, not scheduled for destruction by an item on a balance sheet. I appreciate greatly that the Budget Committee recognized this fact and wisely chose not to allow the oil companies in through a budgetary backdoor."

In the budget presented to Congress by the Bush Administration last month, oil leases in the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain were scheduled to generate revenues of \$2.4 billion. Rep. Markey, along with Reps. DeLauro, Allen, and Capps, sent a letter on February 23rd to the Office of Management and Budget to determine how this revenue figure was calculated. The representatives questioned the methodology in light of the fact that to generate the \$2.4 billion, the leases in the coastal plain would have to sell for between 30 and 150 times higher than leases elsewhere on the North Slope in the last fifteen years. OMB has not yet responded.

Of the Administration's projections, Mr. Markey said, "This appears to be a case of gross deception and misinformation. It would be unacceptable to decide the fate of our country's most pristine wilderness through Enron accounting methods. We believe that the people of America deserve an honest debate over this very special place. I hope that we do not destroy one of God's most magnificent ecological systems on the basis of illusory economic projections."